

To the Planning and Development Committee

Please vote NO on HB5429, an Act Concerning Transit Oriented Development.

It is vague and unclear regarding how to calculate the actual quantity of units being mandated for as-of-right development in the 60 or so towns and cities in Connecticut that have trains or rapid transit bus stations.

However our own Planning Director has calculated that it could impose an increase in new housing of up to 30% with a corresponding increase of up to 17% in population, all in the area around our 3 train stations. This is impossibly burdensome- infrastructure improvements and public works projects would fall on the Town budgets and school redistricting would need to be undertaken.

The bill fails to exempt historic sites or historic districts, open space preservation, or inadequate sewer capacity. These are unacceptable omissions from this bill.

The bill fails to mandate as much affordable housing as Fairfield now already mandates in its existing TOD regulations- the bill allows any development with under 6 new units to have NO affordable housing at all, and developments with 6 or more units it only requires 10% to be affordable. This means that existing organic affordable housing and middle housing in the 500 acres surrounding train stations are at risk for being sold to developers who will then construct full market rate or luxury town houses with NO affordable units. It also means that developer investment would be siphoned away from 8-30g, the affordable housing law that requires 30% of the new units to be affordable. As density is mandated with under 10% affordability, over time this would push Towns further away from already impossible 8-30g goal of 10% of all its housing stock being affordable.

Finally the bill fails to include any component for small businesses which are traditionally an important component of TOD planning. By incentivizing ONLY housing we can expect over time that the TOD areas will lose commercial activity to be replaced with housing which itself will be 90-100% at full market rates.

Towns that have multiple transit stations, such as Fairfield, would have triple the density mandate- it is just bad planning and would result in unintended adverse impacts, to mandate that over 1,500 acres of land in one Town be subject to development outside of the control of its own elected, and accountable, zoning officials.

The bill as drafted will not achieve the objectives and will actually jeopardize our own TOD planning which is continuing on an ongoing basis. There are alternate means of encouraging TOD while enabling Towns that already have TOD planning to continue to do so in a way that the Town can accommodate.

Please do NOT support HB5429.

Sincerely,
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